

As a result of the power wielded by the state's African American congressman George White, North Carolina had more black postmasters than any other state. While Wilmington's postmaster, William Chadbourn, was white, he was a Republican and had made it a policy to reward local blacks with well-paying jobs in the post office as clerks and carriers. Black postmasters, letter carriers, and clerks became targets of the white supremacy campaign of 1898, and, after Democratic victories in 1898 and 1900, the number of black postal workers steadily declined.¹³ There were nine postal workers in the city in 1897 and by 1900, the number had dropped to four.

The occupational category with the highest level of status and economic impact was the professional category. Professional positions required a higher level of educational training, and men and women in those positions were well-known throughout the city. In 1897 there were 59 professionals in the city. Of that number, the largest groups were educators (33) and ministers (15).¹⁴ Most of the educators were female teachers but there were also three principals, including at least one woman, and one "professor." There were only five doctors in the city and only one African American attorney was listed in the city directory for the year.

Changes in the 1900 City Directory

By 1900, the city directory reflected the dramatic changes that swept through the city as a result of the 1898 white supremacy campaign and the violence of November 10. The directory contained occupational listings for 2,497 African American workers, almost 1,000 fewer than the 1897 directory. A comparison of the directories shows the immediate changes that took place in the city as a result of the white supremacy campaign, the violence, the mass exodus, and the attempts by whites to change hiring practices to favor white employees over black. At first glance, it is obvious that there was a downward shift in all directions when occupations are tied to status and economic factors. There were fewer skilled tradesmen, domestics, builders, clerical workers, retail, service, and railroad workers, but there were more laborers, professionals, and industrial workers.



White supremacy banners hang along the wharf behind Maffitt's Chandlery. Physical reminders of white unity against "negro domination" persisted into the 20th century. Many black-owned businesses left the core of the downtown commercial district in the years following the violence and black retail employees lost jobs to white clerks and workers.

Image: Lower Cape Fear Historical Society.

¹³ Benjamin Justesen observed that black postal workers were targeted by the white supremacy campaign because they were the "most widely visible of all federal appointees outside Washington" and they "received their jobs because of their political connections." Benajmin Justesen, "Black Postmasters and the Rise of White Supremacy in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, (April, 2005), 193-227.

¹⁴ There were three principals, one professor and twenty-nine teachers, most were women.